

- MCAS scores for spring 2003 were slightly lower than the prior year, particularly in Grade 4 math. Scores for Amherst students, however, were higher than the state average. Student scores on the Terra Nova test, which is administered to third and sixth graders, showed improvement in almost every area.
- Chartwells, a food services management company, completed their first year providing food services for all district schools. A Food Services Advisory Committee met throughout the year to guide the work of Chartwells, including providing advice about student nutrition awareness. Lunch prices remain unchanged.
- A subcommittee of teachers and administrators met during the year to develop guiding principles for professional development which contribute to the learning of all students. The principles include those that are results-oriented and transformative, collaborative and collegial, those which connect current theory to practice, are responsive to students' ever-changing needs, are sustained, continuous, and ongoing and those which are designed to promote active learning.
- Based on the five core propositions identified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the Framework for Professional Practice, a team of teachers and administrators developed draft teaching standards for the district. The standards are intended to guide teaching as well as professional and personal relationships with students, colleagues, and the community at large. The domains of teaching addressed by these standards are Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities.
- An FY 05 budget which represented a 4.84% increase over FY 04 was approved by Town Meeting. It included about \$160,000 diverted from capital funds and was supported by an override in the amount of \$2,000,000 in the spring. Even so, significant cuts had to be made to the budget including reductions to the Hitchcock Center, supplies, equipment, library paraprofessionals and other staffing, the Homework Club, staff development, and after-school programming.
- It is expected that Fort River and Wildwood Schools will be renovated within the next few years. A comprehensive plan is being developed for each of the schools.
- Nick Yaffe was appointed permanent principal of Mark's Meadow School. Karen Lowe was appointed Interim Principal of Wildwood School for the 2004-2005 school year.
- Two members of the School Committee, Elaine Brighty and Alisa Brewer, served on the Amherst Joint Capital Planning Committee.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL SCHOOLS
Fiscal Year 2004

Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee

Barbara Love, Chairperson (Amherst) term completed March 30, 2004
Marianne Jorgensen, Vice-Chairperson (Shutesbury)
Chairperson, as of March 30, 2004
Elaine Brighty, Secretary (Amherst), Vice-Chairperson March 30, 2004
Alisa Brewer (Amherst)
James Duda (Pelham)
Michael Hussin (Pelham)
Michael Katz (Leverett) Secretary, March 30, 2004
Vladimir Morales (Amherst)
Tony Rogers (Amherst) term completed March 30, 2004
Andrew Churchill elected March 30, 2004
Tom Flittie elected March 30, 2004

The Regional School Committee represents the four communities that comprise the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District: Amherst, Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury. It is responsible for the direction and support of the educational programs for students in Grades 7 through 12 from each of these towns. Committee meetings are open to the public, except for executive sessions as prescribed by law, and are held regularly on the second and fourth Tuesday evenings of each month. Opportunity is available at every meeting for public participation.

Dr. Jere Hochman completed his first full year as Superintendent of Schools. Dr. Hochman began his work by articulating that all district work must be centered on students and their relationship with teachers, with a goal to have high achievement, a sense of belonging and community.

STUDENTS

The enrollment in the Regional Middle and Senior High Schools has stabilized over the past few years, as projected. Enrollments on October 1 over the last several years were as follows:

1994-1995 – 1722
1995-1996 – 1769
1996-1997 – 1907
1997-1998 – 1937
1998-1999 – 2007
1999-2000 – 2017
2000-2001 – 2044
2001-2002 – 2068
2002-2003 – 2032

2003-2004

Grade	Amherst	Pelham	Leverett	Shutesbury	Wards	Tuition	Total
7	239	20	22	28	4	14	327
8	216	27	28	36	-	30	337
9	286	21	24	30	-	17	378
10	223	28	18	33	1	17	320
11	265	21	18	27	2	16	349
12	260	10	22	20	2	18	332
TOTALS	1,489	127	132	174	9	112	2,043

In addition, 43 Regional students were enrolled in Vocational Schools as of October 1, 2003. Fourteen students attended other school districts under the state's School Choice Program, and 44 students were enrolled at charter schools. Tuition for district students to attend these schools is paid by the Regional School District.

There were 314 students from Amherst who graduated with the class of 2004.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Amherst-Pelham Regional High School is a four-year comprehensive school and is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The student body of the High School and Middle School is culturally diverse, with a population that includes 72% Caucasian, 10% African-American, 9% Asian, 7% Hispanic and 1% Native American, and includes native speakers of 24 languages. Masters or doctoral degrees are held by 89% of the faculty.

The instructional program, developed by teachers in all areas of the curriculum, reflects the overall philosophy and goals of education established by the School Committee. An appropriate range of support services remains in place to help students achieve their highest possible potential. Included among these programs are Guidance, Health Services, Special Education, and English Language Learners Program.

The students in the Regional schools work hard and excel. For the 2003-2004 school year, in a class of 332 students, 30 high school students received National Merit Commendations and 3 were National Merit Scholarship semifinalists who received Certificates of Merit. Ninety-three percent of our students will pursue higher education at colleges and universities across the nation after graduation from the Amherst Regional High School. Nationally normed standardized testing results reflect that, overall, our students score significantly above grade level in all areas tested. Students consistently enroll in courses beyond the standard graduation requirements.

Primary goals for the Regional Schools are as follows:

1. developing and maintaining an up-to-date, innovative, multicultural, academically challenging curriculum that promotes high standards and success for all students
2. providing creative, multi-faceted instruction that maintains high standards, engages all students, and enables all students to be successful learners

3. making all students feel fully welcome and a part of our schools, regardless of race, class, gender, language, religion, sexuality, culture, academic success, or physical abilities
4. eliminating the achievement gap among students from different racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds
5. addressing the demands and opportunities facing our schools as a result of the rapid growth in the use of technology throughout our society
6. increasing communication and collaboration among the district's stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and the larger community – and using parents and the community more effectively as educational resources
7. hiring and retaining a high quality teaching and administrative staff
8. equipping and maintaining school buildings to provide healthy, accessible, modern learning environments that support the achievement of our mission
9. sustaining a physically and emotionally safe environment in our schools for students and staff.

There were several matters to which the Regional School Committee and the Superintendent gave considerable attention:

- Superintendent Hochman conducted a “World Café” event in the fall of 2003. Funded through National Evaluation Systems, the purpose of the event was to bring together school and community members interested in equity and social justice issues to assist the district in bringing more focus to the Becoming A Multicultural School System initiative. One outcome of the event was the establishment of a Town BAMSS Committee to extend the work of the schools into the entire community.
- Significant effort focused on implementing a structured English immersion program, as required by passage of the UNZ referendum in November 2002. Significant staff training was conducted by Debbie Zacarian, Director of the English Language Learner's Program.
- A group was formed in the fall to conduct a feasibility study for the implementation of a dual-language program. Work on the possibility of providing such a program will continue during the 2004-2005 school year.
- A safety and security committee was convened to work on discipline, response, prevention and safety issues in the district.
- Renovations to the middle school were completed in the fall of 2003. The renovation project addressed electrical, heating and ventilation issues in the building.
- A mid-cycle review of the Special Education program in Amherst and Region was conducted in September 2003. While there were many positive remarks in the report, the investigator found that the district needs to be more consistent in the use of certain forms and more thorough in its documentation of procedures. Corrective action has been taken to remedy the situation. Special Education Director, Maria Geryk, began to explore ways in which to consider the disproportionality of students of color in the program.

Members of all four towns met with school administration in preparation for the FY 05 budget cycle. Dr. Hochman worked with the school committee on developing budget

standards, priorities, and goals. Concurrently, there were serious concerns about local, state and federal funding. The Regional Agreement was amended for the second year in a row, so as to equalize assessments for all four towns (with Amherst again contributing a larger share than would have been the case without the amendment). Nevertheless, and in spite of an Amherst override in the amount of \$2,000,000 that was ultimately supported by the smaller towns in the Region there were significant cuts to the Regional Schools budget.

- In the fall, test scores were released from the spring 2003 administration of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test. Three-year comparisons of school performance results show that the students in our district perform at levels higher than the state averages. At the tenth grade level, the percent of students scoring in the warning category continues to diminish. The work of aligning district curriculum, as appropriate, continues, as does the examination of the effectiveness of MCAS tutorial classes, after-school programs and summer school courses.
- A subcommittee of teachers and administrators met during the year to develop guiding principles for professional development, which contribute to the learning of all students. The principles include those that are results-oriented and transformative, collaborative and collegial, those which connect current theory to practice, are responsive to students' ever-changing needs, are sustained, continuous, and ongoing and those which are designed to promote active learning.
- Based on the five core propositions identified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the Framework for Professional Practice, a team of teachers and administrators developed draft teaching standards for the district. The standards are intended to guide teaching as well as professional and personal relationships with students, colleagues, and the community at large. The domains of teaching addressed by these standards are Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities.
- A United States History grant, generated through the Donohue Institute at the University of Massachusetts, provided \$864,000 in professional development funds for area teachers in the study of the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
- In February, high school students performed "The Vagina Monologues" as a non-school sponsored event, which generated significant controversy, along with local and national publicity for the school district. Participation in the project and attendance was optional, and students under 18 were required to have parental permission to perform and/or attend the event. To support the event, a week-long series of workshops was held with students, which focused on gender and abuse issues.
- While plans were made to replace the high school roof, a project expected to cost \$750,000 to \$1,000,000, Requests for Proposals (RFPs) received were much higher than expected. It was, therefore, decided to wait until fall 2003 to proceed with the project.

- A new high school principal, Mark Jackson, was hired to head Amherst-Pelham Regional High School. Mark had served as a secondary principal in New Jersey for eight years.
- The High School Parent Center continued the Study Circle initiative, which studies the responsiveness of our district to all learners, along with issues of racism, classism, power, and inequity. Plans were made to institute a “First Day” program, which brings school families and community members together to celebrate the first day of school each year.